

The Mystery of The Devil's Ace Or, The Manor Mystery By Fergus Hume

Author of "The Mystery of a Hansom Cab."

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SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

High Sir John Newby has a twin brother, Richard, who is his secretary. Newby's murdered body is found in a secret room under the tower of an English manor house owned by Francis Clair. In this room, centuries earlier, Clair's ancestor won the manor by playing the "Devil's Ace." According to tradition, the turning of this card still lying on the table of the secret room will chance the family fortune. Clair is poor. He has planned for his daughter, Dorothy, to wed Sir John. The girl is engaged to Percy Hallon, a young engineer, who lives with his friends, Willy and Billy, in a small flat in London. Clair's widowed sister, forbids Dorothy to marry Hallon, claiming that he is in debt. Given by Mrs. Hallon, Newby's eccentric housekeeper, Willy suggests that the murder, the crime having been committed with a knife he used to own. She tells Hallon of the revenue voted by the Abbot from whom Clair's ancestor won the house.

CHAPTER VIII.

(Continued.)

Hidden Treasure.

"A BEOT HURLEY had the treasure of the manor," he explained. "Somewhere in the neighborhood there is a rich treasure hidden—church plate and crosses and chalices and pyxes and jewels and gold and—"

"Stop! Stop!" interrupted Hallon. "While Willy paused for lack of breath, he made my mouth water. It's like describing the plunder of a Spanish galleon in the good old buccannery days. Is there no document to show where this wealth is concealed?"

"No," said Willy, carefully. "Abbot Hurley was too clever for that. He simply hid the plate by night and bolted with his monks—so the document says. Amvay Clair and several of his descendants have searched again and again, but without success. Could Mr. Clair find that treasure it would make him wealthy."

"I don't think so," said Willy, calmly. "The plate would have to be returned to the church it belonged to."

"Billy winked. 'You bet,' said he, confidentially. 'And Mr. Clair is the abbot of the monastery now. Lay down your yarn on those lines.'"

"And might I suggest," said Hallon, still bent upon learning what he greatly desired to know, "that you might make Amvay Clair go mad when he could not find the treasure? It would only be justice, seeing that he won by the Devil's Ace. But I suppose," he added artfully, "that there is no madness in the Clair family."

"Oh, Non-sense!" "General Clair was mad," said Willy unexpectedly, and there she was striking the very trail Percy wished to follow. "You know that portrait over the door in the drawing-room—the soldier—was one of George III's generals. Your remark to-day about Lady Panwin glancing at that portrait set me thinking about him. I wonder," added Willy, meditatively and almost glancing at the right explanation, "if Lady Panwin thought that Mr. Clair was going to be nearly killed, and recalled her father's madness."

"Feelings," said Hallon, with outward calmness, but inwardly excited, "I suppose she thought that the lunacy might be hereditary."

Willy thrust out her chin. "Why, non-sense!" she cried, glibly. "Oh, General Henry went mad through sunstroke in India."

"Oh!" Hallon's heart gave a leap as he mista seemed to clear away. "Then there is no chance of insanity being in the blood?"

"Not in the least. There was a local cause for the poor man's going off his head. He died in Bedlam, poor soul. I read it all in some letters addressed to his son. Lady Panwin must be silly to think that Mr. Clair was going mad."

"You suggested that," hinted Billy, anticipating Percy.

"Because Lady Panwin looked at the portrait of the General. But Mr. Clair was only upset by the news of the death."

"Or his conscience smote him," said Billy, yawning.

"Oh, rubbish!" cried Hallon, testily. "Don't be talking of that again. You silly ass! There is absolutely no reason to believe that Mr. Clair is guilty."

"But the circumstantial evidence—" "Many a man who was innocent has been hanged upon such evidence. I want greater proof of Clair's guilt than what Willy says."

"Guilty or Not Guilty?" "I say nothing," hesitated Miss Willy, anxiously. "I had my suspicions, but I was never certain that Mr. Clair was guilty. Only to you and Billy have I mentioned what I thought. I don't intend to talk on the subject again," she ended decisively.

"You will be well, then, you said. But with regard to your novel, it seems to me that with the General's madness and the hidden treasure and that infernal game of cards you have plenty of material to build up a first class story."

And then Hallon went on to suggest the lines upon which Willy's proposed novel should be laid down. He did this to avert suspicion as to his real aim in asking questions, and introducing the subject, but his heart sang within him that night when he retired to bed.

He could now prove to Lady Panwin with the assistance of a doctor, if he could, that there was no chance of a merely local insanity of the Georgian general, being inherited by his descendant. From the fact that the general and his father were free, and the first could marry, it was evident that the general could be proved innocent of the homicidal mania which Lady Panwin unwillingly suspected.

Of course, there remained the fact that, if guilty, Francis Clair had planned the murder of Sir John. Hallon had already argued out the theory, and judged Clair to be innocent. Therefore he felt at ease with a mile on his lips and peace in his heart.

CHAPTER IX.

The Count.

THE next morning he refused to go in the motor car with his young hosts for a spin, and when he saw them disappearing down the Aisleigh road in a cloud of

just he strolled quietly up to the Manor. He desired to see Lady Panwin, and to explain that there was absolutely no reason why Dorothy should be condemned to spinsterhood. If she—the elder woman—were only convinced of this, she might, out of sheer gratitude for such information, be willing to persuade Mr. Clair into consenting. Then everything would go well.

Jealousy.

It was a delightful summer morning, all sunshine and perfume and radiant life. Quite the sort of happy day to choose for courting. Hallon anticipated being with Dorothy in the quiet Dutch garden near the tower, talking about his future here. But when he emerged from the avenue he found that there was another Richmond in the field. That is, Dorothy, who was strolling on the lawn, with a scarlet sunshade over her uncovered head, had a young man walking by her side. And such a handsome man—tall, slim and graceful, with quick blue eyes and curly yellow hair. The face, which turned toward Hallon, was oval, fair and clean-shaven, save for a small golden moustache. This Apollo, of whom at first sight the lover felt jealous, was dressed in blue serge, with smart brown boots and a straw hat. He looked extremely English and aristocratic; yet when Hallon came up Dorothy introduced her cavalier as a foreigner.

"Count Bezkoft," Mr. Hallon," said Dorothy, with flushed cheeks, as she saw the jealousy in her lover's dark eyes.

"I am happy to meet you, Mr. Hallon," Count Bezkoft spoke wonderful English, with scarcely a trace of foreign accent.

Hallon removed his Panama gravely and nodded in polite silence, then turned toward Miss Clair.

"I congratulate Mr. Clair. He will be enabled to restore the Manor to its former splendor."

"And help the good cause, also, I hope," struck in Bezkoft.

"I beg your pardon," said Hallon, in puzzled tones.

"I am an Anarchist!"

"Ah! I forgot," rattled on the Count, gaily. "You are not aware that I am a Red Revolutionary, an Anarchist, a Socialist, a Nihilist—in fact, all that is bad in your English eyes. I was an intimate friend of Sir John's, and had he lived it was his intention to help the poor to carry on our war against the tyrants at St. Petersburg. Mr. Hallon, Sir John's millions would have come in very handy, I assure you."

"No doubt," agreed Percy, drily. "But Mr. Clair is not in possession of Sir John's millions. Nor do I think that he has much sympathy with the views which you entertain regarding a new era for Russia."

Bezkoft laughed in a boyish manner. "Right in both cases, Mr. Hallon. With your solid English sense, you have stated the position correctly. Sir John's millions, with the exception of a few legacies, and this income to Mr. Clair, have gone to charitable societies, with which, as an Anarchist, I have small sympathy. But two thousand a year can do much, if properly spent."

"I scarcely think Mr. Clair will spend it in Russia, Count."

"Oh, yes—that is, when I have had a talk with him. You must not take my talk of Anarchism and Nihilism too seriously, Mr. Hallon. I merely use those terms because the aims of truly patriotic Russians are inconceivable to your countrymen, and perhaps to you, unless they are so tickled. I hope for a bloodless revolution myself."

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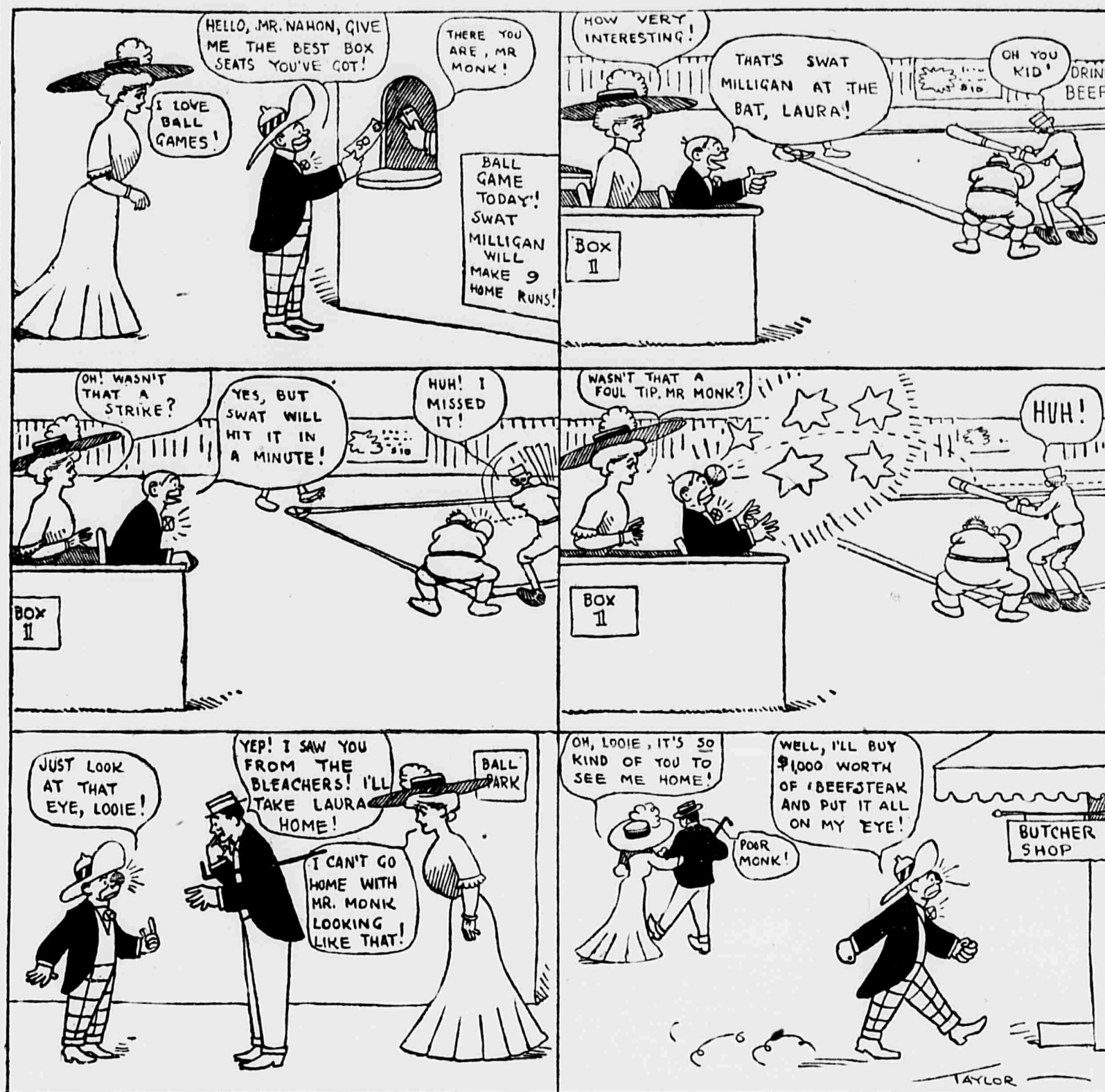
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The Million Dollar Kid

By R. W. Taylor



Betty Vincent's Advice on Courtship and Marriage.

She Wants to Meet Him.

Dear Betty: CAN you tell me how I can get acquainted with an actor of Brooklyn in whom I am very much interested? I know he is unmarried.

ANXIOUS.

Unless you have a mutual acquaintance who can introduce you to him there is no way to meet him.

Maid of Honor's Duties.

Dear Betty: WILL you kindly tell me who rides in the carriage with the bride on her way to the church? Will you also please tell me the duties of a bridesmaid and a maid of honor?

M. H.

The bride's father accompanies her to the church. The maid of honor holds the bride's bouquet when the wedding ring is put on, raises her veil after the ceremony and as the bride turns from the altar to march down the aisle stoops down and straightens her train. The bridesmaid has no especial duties.

It Is Proper to Accept.

Dear Betty: IS it improper for a young lady to go with her fiancé to see some of his folks, whom she has never met, and stay three or four days or perhaps a week?

A. R. P.

If the young man's mother or nearest relative writes the young lady inviting her to visit them it is perfectly proper for her to accept the invitation, even though she has not met them before.

The Lawyer—What's that?

Client—I see, kin a feller whose income is only \$5 cents a week he sued for breach of promise.

Teacher—Johnny, where are your sums?

Johnny—Why—er, teacher, you see, I was afraid I'd be late, and I ran fast that the wind blowed 'em all off me slate!

Reflections of a Bachelor Girl.

By Helen Rowland.



HELEN ROWLAND

NE flirtation doesn't make a summer. A man can forgive a girl for a moral slip or a frayed reputation more easily than for a slipped stitch in her stocking or a frayed skirt binding.

Too many "flames" dry up the wellspring of love.

Marriage is a salad, into which a woman should pour enough sugar and oil to completely disguise the vinegar.

A man always thinks he can win an argument with a woman by talking baby talk to her—and he nearly always can.

Plunging yourself at a man's head is like flinging a bone at a cat—it doesn't fascinate him; it frightens him.

A man regards matrimony as he does a cold bath; he knows it will be good for him, but he shivers while he hesitates to take the plunge until some girl comes along and shoves him in.

It is difficult for an old horse to learn new tricks, but an old man hasn't sense enough not to try.

Puzzle Summs

THIS SUM SPELLS MAGPIE

MAGNET - NET + PIE

WHAT KIND OF A DOG DOES THIS SPELL?

2 + 2 = 5

RAT

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Tess Has an Axe For the Tip Game

How a Boarding-House John Got Her Goat

By Joseph A. Flynn.



JOSEPH A. FLYNN

Important question?

"Where I always stood," she replied, her pretty features contorted with pain from wearing a new pair of black, button ties. "Put me right down for one holding a small axe behind my back for this tip business. You never see me pushing out a nervous mit, all ready to say 'Thank you.' Lizzie holds out both hands and a dollar's worth of laughing gas for every nickel, but not yours truly."

"Once upon a time I got a good per every week, and was as satisfied as a giddy with the first rag doll. One day a settler got absent minded at finding two real clams in the chowder, and handed me a new dime; and Mrs. Starve-em witnessed the crime. Since then my per has been slashed good and hard, and now the salary and tips just about come up to what I used to make in."

"When I was slaving for a salary alone I knew where I stood, and if I wanted to invest in a new pair of tribus on Saturday afternoon I was sure of getting them, provided the undertaker didn't get me in the meantime; but it's different now."

"This tipping business certainly gets my goat, because I was never dragged up but raised as gently as a sunflower in a corner lot, and besides, mother never let us girls forget that about two thousand years before she knew us a certain member of the family had been before his name. Whether he was the King of Spain or the King of Spades I don't know, but he was a king anyway."

"When I was a giddy I got a medal for being proud, and when these key punchers raise their home-made eyebrows and hand me a bent nickel, like as if they were loosening up a house and lot, I feel like going out in the yard and telling my right fist what I think of it for taking the coin."

"Did I ever tell you about the John that caught me asleep? A certain party that caught me here not long ago looking like the front of a bank. The first time he annoyed the table he got my good ear and tore off this game. 'Now, fair one, I am a man of peculiarities, and have made it a point through life never to tip. I maintain tipping is unmanly, that it tends to batter down one's inherent pride and independence, and is almost as bad as telling a secret to a bartender. Here's my plan. I'll give you no tip, but should you ever want a handsome present just let me know and it's yours. Money is no object to me, and you can have anything your little heart may desire.' I said, 'How long are you that way?' But he only smiled a little wider and came back with, 'I'm always this way. Think it over.'"

"The proposition looked good to me, so I felt. He was here about two months, and I always handed him a double portion of everything, especially the pie; so the week before Christmas I called his game. I told him nothing would suit my lily whites better than a bright ringer, and, sure enough, Christmas morning found me wearing the slickest flash you ever saw."

"He left the camp next day, and we haven't seen his face since. I nursed the ring for a week and was just beginning to fall in love with the splash I was making when one afternoon two Central Office men tripped over the mat and separated me from my solitaire."

"Why, I really don't comprehend your meaning. I gasped in astonishment, as a young lady opposite made a fifth trip into the pickle bowl. 'It can't be possible he stole it?'"

"Stole molasses?" Tess replied, as an elderly gentleman beside me set the ring for a boy at being favored with a whole potato. "He bought it on the installment plan, you know, a-dollar-down-and-a-dollar-when-you-catch-me, and handed them a phony check for the first payment."

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